IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claim 1 and add new claim 10 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A surface treatment method for removing a passive film on a surface of a metal material ~~prior to heating with a temperature maintaining process~~, said surface treatment method comprising:

raising the temperature of said metal material~~, which has not been subjected to a passive film removing treatment,~~ to a temperature at which the surface treatment is performed in a place in which amino resin is present, and during the raising of the temperature, removing the passive film by C, N and H which are liberated from the amino resin.

2. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material prior to heating said metal material.

3. (Original) The surface treatment method according to claim 2, wherein said amino resin is applied to said surface of said metal material by a solvent.

4. (Withdrawn) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said amino resin is not applied to said surface of said metal material and wherein said

amino resin is placed in a heat treatment furnace together with said metal material to heat said metal material.

5. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein melamine resin, urea resin, aniline resin, or formalin resin is used as said amino resin.

6. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 1, wherein said surface of said metal material is modified by forming a hardened layer or a compound layer on said surface of said metal material subsequently to removing the passive film.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) The surface treatment method according to claim 6, wherein

nitriding or carburizing is performed.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (New) The surface treatment method according to claim 8, wherein

performing a nitriding treatment, which comprises a combination of ammonia gas and an endothermic gas (RX gas), or a carburizing treatment after the removing of the passive film,

wherein the performing of the nitriding treatment comprises applying the combination of the ammonia gas and the RX gas at a first predetermined temperature for a first predetermined period of time, and

the performing of the carburizing treatment comprises applying a carburizing gas at a second predetermined temperature for a second predetermined period of time.